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# **SOUTHERN NEVADA COUNTERTERRORISM CENTER THREAT ASSESSMENT**

## SOUTHERN NEVADA COUNTER TERRORISM CENTER SITUATIONAL ASSESSMENT

PRODUCED BY

SOUTHERN NEVADA COUNTER

TERRORISM CENTER

(SNCTC)



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Assessment Date: **March 07, 2012**

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**(U) INTRODUCTION**

**(U//LES)** This Situational Assessment has been developed by the SNCTC to provide the heads of SNCTC partner agencies and the State of Nevada Homeland Security Advisor with a preliminary assessment of the potential for violence regarding the dispute between federal law enforcement and a Nevada citizen/community. SNCTC has included Personally Identifiable Information (PII) in this brief to provide select recipients with a contextual understanding of the individuals involved in the dispute. This brief may not be forwarded to any recipient without the express permission of the SNCTC Director, and should be handled in a manner that protects the PII contained herein.

**(U//LES//RESTRICTED DISSEMINATION)** Cliven Bundy and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have been involved in a dispute for approximately 20 years concerning grazing rights, and open range issues near Mr. Bundy's property in Bunkerville, Nevada. The BLM has determined that Mr. Bundy is in violation of 43 C.F.R. Subpart 4150, as well as two court orders (dated November 3, 1998 and September 17, 1999) enjoining him from grazing animals on public lands. Mr. Bundy has challenged the authority of the BLM to require compliance with land management laws and grazing statutes, both verbally and in written correspondence. SNCTC makes no assessment regarding the validity of this criminal predicate or Mr. Bundy's challenges to these rulings.

**(U//LES)** In 1989, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the desert tortoise as an endangered species. This ruling caused the BLM to implement grazing restrictions in the Bunkerville area which was designated as desert tortoise habitat. The BLM continued to allow grazing under the new regulations with certain restrictions; however, Mr. Bundy stated he would not comply with the new BLM regulations or the process of applying for grazing permits. He has not purchased any grazing rights since that time, but has continuously grazed cattle on federal lands. The BLM has subsequently stopped offering these grazing permits on the lands in question.

**(U//LES//RESTRICTED DISSEMINATION)** The BLM is preparing to remove Mr. Bundy's cattle from public lands and close off part of the Gold Butte area to the public. This is to comply with mandates for protecting the desert tortoise. In response to this intended action, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) has directed detectives to contact residents of the Alamo, Bunkerville, Logandale, Mesquite, and Virgin Valley areas of Nevada. Detectives have also interviewed residents in the St. George and Cedar City areas of Utah as well as parts of Arizona near Mesquite, Nevada.

**(U//LES)** This assessment is based solely on interviews conducted by LVMPD detectives. These interviews were conducted to determine how the Bunkerville and surrounding communities may react when the cattle removal begins. These interviews occurred in Arizona, Nevada, and Utah.

**(U) KEY FINDINGS**

- **(U//LES//RESTRICTED DISSEMINATION)** Cliven Bundy has been in violation of multiple court orders and federal regulations, involving the grazing of his cattle on U.S. land, for approximately twenty years.
- **(U//LES//RESTRICTED DISSEMINATION)** Cliven Bundy continues to antagonize the BLM with his actions and inaction in complying with court orders.
- **(U//LES//RESTRICTED DISSEMINATION)** The BLM antagonizes Mr. Bundy and his family, which has resulted in the Bunkerville community having an unfavorable opinion of the federal government. The community opinion now views the dispute between Mr. Bundy and the BLM as a land grab by the federal government and not about the desert tortoises or cattle.



- **(U//LES//RESTRICTED DISSEMINATION)** The interactions of BLM \*\*\*\*\* with Mr. Bundy and other members of the surrounding community gives the appearance to the surrounding community that the BLM is intentionally trying to provoke Mr. Bundy into a conflict.
- **(U//LES//RESTRICTED DISSEMINATION)** The likelihood of violence from Cliven Bundy is minimal. The FBI's Behavioral Science Unit's assessment is that Mr. Bundy is not a threat to use violence because of his age and no prior history of violence. It is unlikely that Mr. Bundy will negotiate with the BLM prior to any action being taken to remove his and other individuals' cattle from the Gold Butte area.

## **(U) ASSESSMENT**

**(U//LES//RESTRICTED DISSEMINATION)** Mr. Bundy operates a cattle ranch, which is part of a family trust, and was previously owned and operated by his father. Mr. Bundy has a large, extended family in the Bunkerville area. Mr. Bundy has several siblings and eleven children. Not all of these family members live in the Bunkerville area. Additionally, not all of his family members support him in his actions with the BLM.

**(U//LES//RESTRICTED DISSEMINATION)** Mr. Bundy strongly believes the Clark County Sheriff is the ultimate law enforcement authority over all matters that involve residents of Clark County, land in Clark County, and all of the associated rights that go along with land ownership and use. He does not believe or acknowledge that the federal government has any authority or jurisdiction to regulate land use in Nevada. These sentiments were also held by most individuals who were interviewed by LVMPD detectives. Mr. Bundy and many other individuals who were interviewed also believe the Clark County Sheriff is responsible for protecting him from threats to his property, including threats from the BLM. Several comments made by Mr. Bundy during interviews with detectives provided insight into his likely courses of action should BLM attempt to remove his cattle.

- **(U//LES//RESTRICTED DISSEMINATION)** Mr. Bundy stated his first line of defense would be to call LVMPD.
- **(U//LES//RESTRICTED DISSEMINATION)** Mr. Bundy also stated that there were other ways of dealing with the BLM including trying to stand up and protect his own property, but that could get somebody hurt.
- **(U//LES//RESTRICTED DISSEMINATION)** Mr. Bundy also stated that he believed in the past that the government was going to wipe him out after the incidents at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, and Waco, Texas, and that the only reason this did not occur was because of the Oklahoma City bombing.

**(U//LES//RESTRICTED DISSEMINATION)** SNCTC previously was concerned that a March 3 interaction between Mr. Bundy and BLM \*\*\*\*\* suggested a possible shift in Mr. Bundy's perception of LVMPD. However, SNCTC has subsequently learned that Mr. Bundy associated the BLM interaction with a March 2 visit from LVMPD leadership. Mr. Bundy has since been made aware that these events were not correlated. On March 3, 2012, \*\*\*\*\* suspected Mr. Bundy of using a front loader to do unauthorized road work that resulted in a LVMPD resident officer responding to the scene. Upon arrival, Bundy intimated that the LVMPD Officer would side with the BLM, and specifically asked if LVMPD had an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the BLM. The LVMPD officer explained to the BLM \*\*\*\*\* that Nevada DOT (Department of Transportation) had been doing the road work, that the BLM \*\*\*\*\* initial assessment was incorrect, and that no further interaction with Mr. Bundy was necessary. It is noteworthy that in February 2012, BLM \*\*\*\*\* handed out business cards for \*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* business with \*\*\*\*\* contact information written on the back of the card, creating a possibly unintentional, inferential link between a BLM \*\*\*\*\* with \*\*\*\*\* capabilities and the intended cattle removal operation. However, this action was viewed by Mr. Bundy and others in the



Bunkerville area, as a threat that the BLM was going to use \*\*\*\*\* as part of the cattle roundup in the Gold Butte area.

**(U//LES//RESTRICTED DISSEMINATION)** Mr. Bundy believes the BLM's actions have nothing to do with cattle or the desert tortoise, but rather that it is an attempt by the federal government to take land from the state and the citizens who live there. This sentiment is held by almost every individual who was interviewed by LVMPD detectives. Furthermore, nearly every individual who was interviewed views the BLM's actions as an attempt to deny individuals the right to use land that has always been used by them and has been accessible to them. These actions by the BLM are viewed as an attempt by the federal government to restrict the rights of citizens.

## **(U) POTENTIAL THREATS OF VIOLENCE**

**(U//LES//RESTRICTED DISSEMINATION)** The current analytical assessment based on the interviews by LVMPD detectives is that Mr. Bundy is not willing to negotiate with the BLM. It is possible Mr. Bundy, and some of his family members, would resist any BLM action in removing the cattle. However, it is unlikely that the resistance would be violent in nature. The resistance would be expected to be in the form of protests and picketing, or generating media attention. The FBI Behavioral Science Unit's assessment of Mr. Bundy is that he is not a threat for violent action because of his age and no prior history of violence. Nevertheless, several individuals stated that they would not initiate any violent actions against BLM personnel, but they would defend themselves and return fire if fired upon. Additionally, a couple of Mr. Bundy's relatives stated that they would do anything asked of them, including taking up arms.

**(U//LES//RESTRICTED DISSEMINATION)** One of Mr. Bundy's relatives told detectives that Mr. Bundy plans on conducting a citizen's arrest against any BLM official attempting to remove his cattle. Also, the relative stated that once Mr. Bundy makes a citizen's arrest, he will contact LVMPD to assist with the arrest. LVMPD does not have any information about how BLM personnel will react if Mr. Bundy attempts to make a citizen's arrest. Any response by the BLM may escalate the violence level involving Mr. Bundy, his family, or the citizens of the surrounding community.

## **(U) SUMMARY**

**(U//LES//RESTRICTED DISSEMINATION)** The dispute between Mr. Bundy and the BLM has been on-going for approximately 20 years. Mr. Bundy and the majority of people interviewed by LVMPD detectives do not recognize the authority of the BLM and believe the elected sheriff of Clark County is the ultimate law enforcement authority over all matters that involve residents of Clark County, including land use issues. Almost every individual interviewed by detectives expects LVMPD to protect them and Mr. Bundy from the actions of the BLM. However, a recent interaction between Bundy and BLM \*\*\*\*\* resulted in comments from Bundy that indicate his perception of LVMPD could shift if he feels LVMPD will side against him on behalf of BLM.

**(U//LES//RESTRICTED DISSEMINATION)** It is unlikely Mr. Bundy will negotiate with the BLM, and he may resist any action taken by the BLM to remove his cattle. Resistance is expected to be in the form of protests and peaceful gatherings, but some individuals have stated that they would defend themselves and return fire if fired upon. There is the potential that the use of a non-lethal weapon or instrument could be misinterpreted as being fired upon and quickly escalate the violence of any confrontation.

**(U) INTELLIGENCE GAPS**

1. **(U//LES//RESTRICTED DISSEMINATION)** Will Mr. Bundy take any violent action against BLM personnel if they attempt to remove Mr. Bundy's cattle from the area
2. **(U//LES)** Will citizens from the surrounding community take any violent action against BLM personnel if they attempt to remove Mr. Bundy's cattle from the area
3. **(U//LES)** Why is the BLM taking this action after approximate twenty years of inaction